

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Anwar and Rep. McCarthyVahey, Vice-Chairs Sen. Kushner, Sen. Marx and Rep. Parker, Ranking Members Sen. Somers and Rep. Klarides-Ditria, and Distinguished Members of the Public Health Committee:

Testimony in support of General Assembly Raised Bill No. 1076: AN ACT CONCERNING AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS.

Most of us feel empathy, a reflexive emotional response, when we encounter anyone facing terminal diagnoses. The practice of compassion, however, requires that individuals take action to alleviate human suffering. As politicians, you are in a unique position to take decisive action which could potentially alleviate the suffering of terminally ill patients in CT. I consider S.B. 1076 a bill of compassionate public policy that will give patients a humane choice as they face imminent death and suffering.

In a GQR Research survey conducted in March 2021, 75% of CT respondents (as do 74% of Americans according to a 2020 Gallup poll) indicated their support for medical aid in dying (MAID) legislation. The legislature has failed to pass right-to-die legislation 15 times since 1994. Most recently, the Judiciary Committee used a parliamentary procedure to prevent the legislation from advancing. At present, 10 states and Washington, DC allow medical aid-in-dying. In the 26 years since Oregon enacted their law, there have been no cases of abuse, misuse or coercion (“Families make another push for legal ‘medical aid in dying’ in Connecticut, Craven, John, January 18, 2023, *News 12 Westchester*) This safety record should reassure doubters that the law has worked as intended. It’s also worth noting, that hospice and palliative care use has increased by 20% since the MAID legislation was enacted.

As for the specifics of SB 1076, it requires strict eligibility requirements. A patient must be an adult, have a minimum of one year residency in CT, have six months or less to live, be able to make an informed healthcare decision and be able to take the medication themselves. In addition to the eligibility requirements, many safeguards are included. Two doctors and/or qualified clinicians must confirm that the patient has six months or less to live — due to terminal illness, not because of age or disability. Two qualified clinicians and two independent witnesses must confirm that no coercion exists. Coercion is subject to criminal prosecution.

Patients and their families are looking for options to ease the pain and suffering of their loved ones as they face their final days. Many of the speakers at today’s hearing will once again relay their stories of witnessing the agonizing end of their loved one’s life. Please listen with empathy and then act with compassion and pass SB 1076. If you haven’t already seen a loved one dying with metastatic cancer, it’s likely that you will one day. Give them the chance to die with dignity.

Respectfully,

Linda Pryde  
Westport, CT

